

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

No. 692.—VOL. XIV.

SATURDAY, APRIL 3, 1897.

PRICE 1½d.

THE BELEAGUERED LADY.

BY H. D. LOWRY.

AUTHOR OF 'WOMEN'S TRAGEDIES,' 'MAKE-BELIEVE,' ETC.

CHAPTER I.

Of what happened before the time of my coming into Western Cornwall I have not space to tell. I struck away to the north coast as soon as I was able, and arrived presently at a village two miles to the east of Newky. Here I stayed until the evening in the cottage of a widow woman whose son had fought at Launceston, and commended me to her when he knew that I was wanting to get westward to St Michael's Mount. Towards dark I continued my journey to Newky.

It had been my purpose to find some one who should take me by water 'round the land,' as the saying is, and give me the opportunity to land on the Mount. The harbour, I knew, would be closely beleaguered, but there were ways known only to a few of entering the castle once the Mount had been gained, and this last I could manage securely enough, being from boyhood a swimmer and accustomed to long hours in the water. My dear love was upon that rocky island, and I swore it would take more than all the forces of the Roundheads to keep me from her arms.

I could find no man ready to do the whole of what I desired, for I might not inquire very openly; but in the end I came upon one who was prepared, for a consideration, to land me on the coast hard by St Ives, and this suited my purpose hardly less admirably. I knew the country field by field, and almost yard by yard. It would be strange if I could not get down quietly to the marshes by Marazion, and take an opportunity to swim across and land upon the Mount under the cover of night.

It was about nine o'clock at night when we set sail, and I fell in very readily with my companion's mood of silence. Duty had taken me away from the west, but now it clearly called me

back again, and the thought of this necessity was inexpressibly grateful. For in the castle the Roundheads were so intent on capturing was the old chaplain's daughter, Rose Mundy, whom I had loved since she was a child. She was a sort of companion to my Lady Basset, wife of Sir John, and almost like a child of the house.

'Have you heard anything of how the Parliament men are placed?' I asked my companion presently.

'The most of them lie about the shore, and some upon the Mount itself,' he answered. 'Some are farther inland, on the hither side of the marshes. But you must see for yourself, or inquire by the way. I fancy there be some 'pon top of the Great Carn, too.'

It was lucky I knew the country, for this disposition of the enemy meant that I should have no easy task to accomplish in gaining the Mount. However, I did not greatly fear, and when we landed, shortly before the dawn, on the beach called Porthrept, which lies a mile from St Ives along the bay, I paid the sum that I had promised with a good heart, and set forth into the inland country towards where the Mount lay, a few miles southward on the other side of the county.

The land rises very steeply until you are some three hundred feet above the sea. The face of it is mere wastrel: gorse and heather and bramble-brake give hiding to foxes beyond numbering, and there is no place better for the purpose of them that love to see the drawing of a badger. I mounted slowly, and as the dawn came, away in the east, I got more and more sight of my troubled country. I mounted to the old pack-road, and then, swerving a little to the right, as if

St Ives drew me towards it, I crossed a waste space, and mounted to the summit of a hill whence I could look westward, in the direction where my heart already was.

The summit of the Mount, and that alone, was visible, with the sea shining betwixt that point and the little town of Penzance. It seemed that all the land was utterly deserted, for I could discern no token of human life. I had food with me sufficient for the day, and rested in the wood for many hours, my eyes always on the Mount. No one came near me.

Presently I saw that one thing which the owner of the boat had told me was true. The Great Carn, as it is called, is the highest of all the hills in that neighbourhood, and a rude wall of granite surrounding its flattened summit proves it to have been a fortification for many a long day. It gives a view of a big stretch of country, and I saw that a party of men—not more than thirty in number, as I counted them—were occupying it. It was certain I must keep clear of the Great Carn in my advance.

Towards sunset I decided it was time to be moving, and set forth towards the south, going from plantation to plantation, and never more than a few minutes out of cover. I came at last to a little farmstead well known to me of old, and dear because I had often visited it with Rose. The thatch shone a warm brown in the last rays of the sun; the rooks cawed as of old from the ancient elms surrounding the cattle-yard. But when I stood upon the threshold and looked into the kitchen I beheld the huge black hearth all empty, and at first there was no answer to the call I raised.

Presently, however, I heard footsteps moving slouchingly upon the planking overhead, and an old and querulous voice was heard: 'Who's there, and what do 'ee want?'

'Tis I—Dick Harvey,' I cried, recognising the voice as that of the farmer's mother, an aged and decrepit dame, long since past work or activity, 'and my want is news of the Mount and of the people there.'

'Now hush, for mercy's sake,' said the old woman. 'There's no tellin' who may hear. To think that I should live to see the country plunged in war: I, whose father was carried, a child, out o' Newlyn when the Spaniards burned Paul Church.'

'Is there no news?' I asked.

'None to tell of, except that the Parliament men hold the country all around Marazion, and mean to have the castle. There was what they do call a *sortie* the other day, and some killed on the sands, so they say. John is gone to sell them some cattle, I believe, and Jane wouldn't hear o' stoppin' here, so she's gone across the bay, over to Gwethan, with the children.'

'And where are the soldiers?' I asked.

'Everywhere, I believe, my dear,' she said.

'Then 'tis a poor look out for me,' I said, 'for I am going to sleep in the castle to-night. Shall I give your love to Rose?'

'Tis no good for you to tell me that,' she said, looking at me in amazement. 'There's a mort of soldiers betwixt here and the shore; the causeway is guarded, and the castle is all surrounded. Better fit you stop here and wait until peace do come again.'

I laughed, for the information she had given me was extremely pleasing. 'The causeway is guarded, is it?' I asked. 'That means that the tide is to be out to-night, and that they will look for attack from the land-side. Their watch upon the sea will be the less careful, and I shall find it easier to swim out and get ashore. If you will give me a sup of milk and something to eat I will be gone, for I would not care to disturb Rose from her slumbers, and I must see her ere the night is out.'

Having thus put aside her advice, which must still have been disregarded had it been backed by reasons infinitely weightier, I swallowed a morsel of food, and continued my journey to the marshes, continually upon the alert lest I should come inadvertently upon the troops who were said to be waiting on their hither side.

CHAPTER II.

My object was to cross the marshes, where I should be absolutely under cover, then strike across the low hills that stand betwixt them and the back of Marazion village, and take to the sea as near as possible to the Mount. I could see the goal of my hopes before me now, and the lights of it beckoned me on.

To cross the marshes is a hard enough thing by daylight, and none but a fool or a man who knew them well would make the effort at night. I had known their secret pathways from a child, and yet I was afraid of the task of crossing in the dark.

I had reached the last bit of cover, and was within fifty yards of the tall bulrushes whose gentle rustle I could already hear, when a sound of voices struck upon my ear. The sound came from the west, and I crept in that direction upon hands and knees, which soon were sadly lacerated by thorns and the fallen spikes of the gorse. Once my heart came into my mouth. There came on a sudden a shrill shriek of terror. I had startled a blackbird from its nest, and thus it expressed its indignation at my intrusion.

I paused, holding my breath, and instantly heard footsteps advancing, and voices raised in a discussion. 'Fools,' said one man; 'tis only a blackbird frightened by a fox or a stoat. The village folk are little given to late hours and wide wanderings in these days.'

'Doubtless you are right, Zachary,' said another. 'But the orders are to keep a close watch, and orders are made to be obeyed.'

'It seems to me we have done sufficient watching,' rejoined the first speaker. 'We can only expect that the malignants will come to the succour of their party if we continue to wait for them. I am sick of watching: we ought to assault the castle in good earnest while the rear is still unhampered. Then we should be safe against the biggest force that could come against us.'

'Have you not heard?' cried a new voice. 'Well, I suppose it was meant to be kept secret; but we attack the castle to-morrow. Is that good news to you?'

'Good news indeed!' cried the man whom they called Zachary. 'Now, Tom, art willing to leave bush-beating to silly boys, and furbish thy arms against the morn?'

They moved off in the direction of their encampment, and I breathed again. The man Tom had been wandering about in the bushes while

the conversation was in progress, and once he had come perilously near to treading on me. It would have meant his death had he come nearer; but I was not in the mind to die at the price of the life of a single Puritan. I waited a while, and then retreated in the opposite direction to that in which they had gone. Presently I stole across the open and entered the marshes.

Progress was difficult indeed. I had no desire to cause the outbreak of noises not natural to the night; but the marshes were full of wild fowl, and I could not but startle some of these. It seemed to me that my own progress must arouse attention if there were any watchers in the neighbourhood; for, with the utmost care taken, I still fell frequently, through jumping upon delusively firm-looking places, and more than once I sank to the middle and half thought myself lost.

I was wet from tip to toe, and gaggled in the muck of the marshes. My progress was wearying in the extreme, and I was often at a loss for breath. Suddenly a voice startled me, coming like a thunderbolt from the direction in which I was fain to go.

'Who goes there?' cried a voice. 'Answer and come forth, or I fire.'

I had the sense to slip from the more or less solid patch of ground on which I was standing, and lie at full length, my face pressed to the ground, my body half sunken in water and mire.

'Come forth, I say!' came the summons again, and again I did not answer.

I had not long to wait. An explosion rent the silence, and a bullet rushed through the air above me, and immediately the tops of one or two of the bulrushes, severed by the bullet, fell around me. Immediately afterwards I heard my unseen enemy advance, muttering, to the edge of the marsh, and make a few floundering footsteps in my direction. Then there came a splash and a volume of imprecations as he fell forward upon his face.

I could not but laugh aloud, and as the man withdrew to safe ground his imprecations were renewed. It struck me suddenly that this mishap of his might have spoilt his powder. At any rate there was no particular danger in a discreet effort to discover whether this was so. I therefore moved through the bulrushes.

The next words of my enemy assured me I was right. 'Come forth and surrender,' he said, 'or I fire again.'

I did not answer; but the gun was not again discharged. I waited a little longer, and then moved slowly and carefully away from his neighbourhood, still skirting the edge of the marshes. In the course of time I deemed myself arrived at a place of safety. I sought the edge of the marsh, and slipped across the open space to the hills. I crossed these discreetly, and presently came in full sight of the Mount. Then I descended to the beach, lingered a moment in the shelter of the rocks while I put off some of my clothing, and made sure that my knife was secure. Finally I waded out through the earliest waves, and took to the water.

It was a warm summer night, and the stars shone clearly overhead. The sound of the waves breaking on the shores of the bay did but intensify the stillness. I could have fancied all the world was listening as I swam onward.

I had gone out on the side of the Mount which faces Penzance; but as I came closer I swerved a little eastward and drew near to the mouth of the harbour. The causeway was visible as a black line beyond it. I listened and heard voices. Once I was seen, or at least heard, for a stone came hurtling through the air and splashed into the water close beside me, and I heard a voice say: 'If we don't kill that old sea-otter, the capture of the castle will leave me discontented. It has more lives than a cat.'

Not being the creature they took me for, I lay still upon the water and listened. There were a multitude of men gathered about the little harbour and where the causeway touches the Mount, and I could hear them as they laughed and jested. Long as the evening had been to me, the hour was not yet nine, and they were enjoying the coolness of the night.

Having thus rested for a while, I resumed my swimming. On such a night of quietness it would have been possible to land at any point that might be chosen; but, with the sea neutral for the nonce, I had enemies upon the land, and I purposed to go to the outside of the island and get ashore at a point whence it would be easy to climb to the castle unobserved. Once arrived so far, I did not doubt that I should be able to enter. I knew the castle well, and I, if any one, could have led a storming-party with some hope of success. Moreover, I could not banish from my mind a perfectly unreasonable conviction that Rose was aware of my propinquity, and would be upon the alert to give me easy entrance to the place.

It is a longer swim around the island than one would think, and I was not a little tired by my adventures in the marshes, and by the sleepless hours which had passed since I left Newky on board the little boat. Once I was vastly startled by coming within a yard or two of that same sea-otter to which I owed something of my safety hitherto, and disturbing him as he lay upon his side on the gently-heaving water.

At last, however, I looked inward, and saw that I was within fifty yards of the appointed goal. I turned towards the land and swam gently to the landing-place, my heart beating adventurously as I thought of all that might happen in the next half-hour.

Suddenly, when the rock on which I was to land was almost within grasping distance, I stopped, and could have sunk like a stone for very fear. A man stood waiting for me, and I saw that he was leaning upon a matchlock.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND.

BY A PRACTICAL TEACHER.

THE parish schools of Scotland, not the least valuable portion of the legacy bequeathed to his country by John Knox, survived with little modification in their character and constitution until the year 1872. Gray-headed Scotchmen of the present day, if their boyhood was spent in a rural district, retain a vivid, and on the whole a kindly recollection of the old-fashioned 'dominie' and his ways. Appointments to the office of school-master, before 1872, were made in the parish

schools by the heritors, or proprietors of land within the parish, and the parish minister. The examination to which candidates were subjected was by no means formidable, the chief requisite being a fair acquaintance with classics and mathematics. These candidates, however, were generally men of superior scholarship and ability, especially in the northern counties of Scotland, where they were mostly graduates, and made the schoolmaster's desk a stepping-stone to the pulpit. The appointment once made was virtually irrevocable, *ad vitam aut culpam*, as formally expressed—which meant that the teacher was safe in his position so long as no gross moral delinquency could be proved against him. In his own domain the schoolmaster was omnipotent. He made his own code, and feared no interference. His methods of discipline were of the sternest, often barbarous in their severity. To go no farther back than the beginning of the present century, the personal memoirs of Hugh Miller and William Chambers furnish striking illustrations of the brutality exercised in the schools of that period. There was no appeal from the tyranny of the master.

'In the business of elementary instruction,' says Chambers, 'the law of kindness was as yet scarcely thought of. Orders were sometimes given to teachers not by any means to spare the rod. "I've brought you our Jock; mind ye lick him weel!" would a mother of Spartan temperament say to Mr Gray, at the same time dragging forward a struggling young savage to be entered as a pupil.' Once a year the presbytery examined the school publicly, which for weeks before buzzed like a bee-hive with a busy hum of preparation. Lessons were learned by rote. Specimens of handwriting were produced with painful elaboration. The momentous day arrived. The precincts of the school became the scene of unwonted bustle. Vehicles thronged from all quarters of the parish. Parents in their best attire were arrayed round the schoolroom to witness the triumph of their own darlings, or, alas! to share in the mortification of failure.

The ministers entered amid a hush of awe. There was usually among them one towering personality, who made himself spokesman for the rest, who condescended occasionally to supplement the master's questions, and who, when the well-drilled battalions had passed under review, gave expression to the customary congratulations. There was the humorous clergyman, who was jocular over blunders and oddities, and even winked a sly aside to the boys; and there was the clergyman of stern and solemn aspect, in whose countenance there seemed to be concentrated the darkest gloom of Calvinistic theology. If the school happened to be near the manse, and the wind was favourable, whiffs of savoury odours began to float about after midday. Then a manifest restlessness became apparent among the clerical gentlemen. Satisfaction with half-examined classes was hurriedly expressed, and offers of a further display of acquirements were courteously waived aside. The clergyman dined with the parish minister, other visitors dined with the schoolmaster, and thus the great day was pleasantly ended.

But all this is now changed. Early in the present century the attention of parliament was directed to the condition of the endowed schools

in England. The restless and fiery energy of Lord Brougham urged on the investigation with unrelenting vehemence, startling those drowsy and antiquated institutions from the lethargy into which they had gradually sunk. The spirit of inquiry, once aroused, did not again fall asleep. The condition of the elementary schools came next under scrutiny, and parliament gradually approached the conviction that the education of the children in the land was a duty which it was bound to see properly performed, and that money might be as judiciously expended in training the young as in equipping fleets and organising armies. To this result the aspiration expressed by Wordsworth may have contributed:

'Oh for the coming of that glorious time
When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
And best protection, this imperial realm,
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
An obligation on her part to teach
Them who are born to serve her and obey;
Binding herself by statute to secure
For all the children whom her soil maintains
The rudiments of letters, and to inform
The mind with moral and religious truth
Both understood and practised—so that none,
However destitute, be left to droop
By timely culture unsustained, or run
Into a wild disorder, or be forced
To drudge through weary life without the aid
Of intellectual implements and tools;
A savage horde among the civilised,
A servile band among the lordly free.'

Up to 1872 the interference of the State in elementary education in Scotland aimed more at encouragement than control. Training colleges, largely supported by public money, were established in the large towns. Grants were apportioned to teachers, who obtained a government certificate by examinations in these colleges; and these grants were paid annually, after the inspection of the schools of which these teachers were in charge. The Disruption of 1843 had brought about an anomalous state of matters. The Free Church, severing itself from the Established Church, built schools as well as churches in almost every parish. In the rivalry thus created, the parish schoolmaster had the best of it as regards income and position. He had security of tenure, and part of his emolument was derived from the heritors, as a charge upon the land set apart for that purpose at the Reformation. The waste of power and conflict of interests thus created were summarily ended by the act of 1872, which effected a complete revolution in the system of Scotch education. The schools were removed from the control of the Presbytery and the heritors. In every parish a School Board was constituted by popular election, to which the duty was assigned of carrying out the regulations which the Education Department might issue. The right to appoint and dismiss teachers was handed over to the Board, and from its decisions there was no appeal. Its term of office was fixed for three years. The pecuniary aid given to education was largely increased; but the money was apportioned on a new principle, namely, payment by results. A monetary value was affixed to all the passes in all the subjects of examination, and the sum thus earned was the grant for the year. The regulations of the Department were embodied in a code, to be published annually, and one might observe how the timid and tentative supervision

of the past had developed into a system of the most exacting scrutiny and control. Like the elephant's trunk, the Department found nothing too large or too little for its grasp. It regulated the dimensions of gigantic edifices and the size and shape of a child's pinafore. Many of the earlier regulations have been found unworkable and oppressive during the twenty-four years since 1872, and they have been modified or abandoned. The system as it operates at present may now be briefly sketched.

The total yearly grant awarded to a school, the payment of which places the school under the control of the Department, is the resultant of various complex estimates. Thus, there is paid on the annual average attendance of each scholar ten shillings; if singing is well taught, one shilling; if discipline is good or excellent, one shilling or one shilling and sixpence. On the average attendance of girls, a shilling is paid for good needlework; on the average attendance of boys, a shilling if some scientific subject is satisfactorily taught. A rising scale of value marks the various shades of merit in the appearance made by the scholars in the elementary subjects, ranging from one shilling to three shillings and sixpence in the average attendance. What are called class subjects, as English grammar and recitation, geography and history, may earn from four to six shillings on the average attendance of scholars above seven. For mathematics and languages, which are designated specific subjects, four shillings is paid for each pass. Under these regulations, the grant for the year may amount to one pound on the average attendance, more or less, according to the report of the inspector. To become entitled to this money, the school must be conducted in strict conformity with the regulations of the Department. The attendance must be marked twice a day, and the work of teaching performed in accordance with a timetable approved by the inspector.

Six standards of examination are appointed, as annual steps in the ladder of progress. The sixth requires ability to read with good expression, to write a letter clearly and correctly, and to solve questions in vulgar and decimal fractions, in compound proportion and interest.

The inspector may visit the school at any time, but as a rule he comes once a year for the annual examination. For a few weeks before inspection the teacher has a busy and anxious time. He must prepare from the statistics of the year a number of schedules dealing with intricate details and calculations, any error in which may postpone or imperil the grant.

The examination is a very business-like process, as devoid of display as an official audit. Class after class is rapidly tested; the skilful probe of the inspector soon finds out the points of weakness or strength. There are those who say that no man not infallible is competent to estimate accurately in four hours—the time usually occupied in examining a rural school—the work of the teacher during the whole year; but as all human judgments, even those of the judicial bench, are liable to error, we cannot look for infallibility in inspectors. They are, on the whole, men of high character, superior scholarship, and long training, and they acquire an instinctive power of appreciating the general tone

of a school. The report of an inspector, after it has been considered at headquarters in London, is sent back to the School Board, and usually becomes a subject of much local comment and criticism.

A few comments, made in all fairness, may now be allowed. The primary purpose of the present system is to secure for every child a sufficient training in reading, writing, and arithmetic, so that when he leaves school he may be furnished with a mental equipment which shall qualify him to become a capable and intelligent citizen, even if no further study be possible, or shall form a solid basis on which he may build higher or more special instruction. This object has been, on the whole, obtained; and the result is of such immense value that it may well counterbalance a host of alleged drawbacks and defects. No longer do we see in our country schools ungainly rustics, verging on manhood, returning for the winter to rub shoulders with little boys, and laudably and painfully trying to make up for the lost opportunities of earlier years.

The teachers, again, if they lost something by the revolutionary legislation of 1872, have also gained something. Their salaries have been nearly doubled since that time. In the first half of the century the incomes of parish schoolmasters might range from £60 to £100; in the same class of schools now they may range from £120 to £200.

One of the greatest boons ever conferred on the working-classes became possible only under the present system. This was the abolition of fees, or rather the release from the obligation to pay them; for the fees are not extinguished, but the government comes to the relief of the parent, and pays them out of the Probate Duty.

But, admitting all these advantages, there are features of the present system open to strong objection. The old schoolmaster was an individuality, and generally one of pronounced characteristics. The free development of his own nature, the play of his own innate qualities, the independent bearing which he could at all times maintain, gave him an influence over young minds which the teacher of the present day can scarcely hope to acquire. No man can guide others well who must himself walk in fetters; and the teacher is now so hampered, so harassed, by a multitude of minute regulations, that his own idiosyncrasy is stifled within him. If he has ideals of his own, he must sacrifice them. If he feels the promptings of originality, he must crush or disguise them; for originality is the bugbear of officialism. Again, the pecuniary estimate set upon his labours, the absolute necessity of maintaining the annual grant at a high level, if he is to hold his situation, compels him in too many cases to think of that alone, to lose all discrimination of the various capacities and complex nature of the strange little community over which he rules, and to sacrifice all considerations to the paramount one of making a showy but superficial display of attainments on the great day of examination. The mature mind takes no harm from cramming. When a man like Lord Macaulay masters a new language in a few weeks for the sake of historical research, there can be no other feeling than admiration at the feat. It is quite otherwise with juvenile natures, still immature. Under a system of education which resembles the

forced vegetation of the hothouse, the young mind often becomes sickly or distorted, loses the fibre and stamina which are the result of slow and natural growth, and, to vary the metaphor, nature revenges herself, as she generally does in a case of surfeit, by rapidly getting rid of the overload.

One continually hears the phrase, 'The school has earned a large grant,' as if the minds of young children were mere machinery to be driven fast or slow, for profit.

Some years ago an important modification of the Code was made, under which the passes of individual scholars in the three elementary subjects were no longer rated at a specific sum; but it would be a mistake to suppose that the principle of payment by results has been abandoned.

The mode of estimating the results has certainly been altered from the appraisal of the individual scholar to that of the class; but as a sliding scale of merit, determining the grant awarded, is attached to this appraisal, the system is still that of payment by results, and open to all the objections which have been urged against that system.

MY LORD DUKE.*

By E. W. HORNUNG.

CHAPTER XV.—END OF THE INTERREGNUM.

NOBODY was about when they dismounted, so Jack himself led the horses back to the stables, while Olivia gathered up her habit and scaled the steps. The stable clock struck five as the former was returning by way of the shrubbery; another seven hours and Claude would come home with the news. For such an issue it was still an eternity to wait. But Jack felt that the suspense would be easily endurable so long as he could have sight and speech of Olivia Sellwood; without her, even for these few minutes, it was hardly to be borne.

Yet this stage of his ordeal was made up of such minutes. He returned to desolate rooms. Olivia had disappeared; nor could he pitch upon a soul to tell him where she was. Door after door was thrown open in vain; each presented an empty void to his exacting eyes. He ran outside and stood listening on the terrace; and there, through an open upper window, he heard a raised voice railing, which he could not but recognise as that of Lady Caroline. Her words were indistinguishable. But as Jack looked aloft for the window, one was passionately shut; and he neither heard nor saw any more.

The first persons he ultimately encountered were Mr Sellwood and the agent. They had golf-clubs in their hands and wholesome sweat upon their brows. The agent treated Jack as usual; the Home Secretary did not. He stated that he had at last won a round; but his manner was singularly free from exultation; indeed, it was quite awkward, as though perfect civility to his host had suddenly become difficult, and he was ashamed to find it so. Certainly there had been no difficulty of the kind before; and Jack noted

the change, but was too honourable himself to suspect the cause.

He next fell in with the Frekes. This excellent couple loved Jack for his goodness to their children, who were not universally popular. They now carried him off to tea in the nursery, where he stayed until it was time to dress for dinner. Jack liked the children; it was not his fault that they were so seldom in evidence. They were obviously spoilt; but Jack thought they were taken too seriously by all but their parents, who certainly did not take them seriously enough. So he had many a romp with the little outcasts, but never a wilder one than this afternoon, for the children took him out of himself. Their society, had he but known it, was even better for him in the circumstances than that of Olivia herself; it was almost as good as another meeting with Dalrymple of Carara. He rose at length from under his oppressors, dusty, dishevelled, and perspiring, but for the moment as light-hearted as themselves. And there were the grave, sympathetic eyes of the parents resting sadly upon him to recall his trouble. Why should they look sad or sympathetic? Everybody had changed towards him; this was the difference in the Frekes. Could they have divined the truth? No suspicion of a broken confidence entered his head; yet it was sufficiently puzzled as he dressed, with unusual care, to make a creditable last appearance at the head of the table which would prove never to have been his at all. He had quite made up his mind to that; he found it appreciably harder to reconcile himself to the keen disappointment that now met him in the dining-room.

Olivia was not coming down.

'She has knocked herself up,' explained Lady Caroline tersely. 'So would any girl—not an Australian—who rode so far on such a day. Your Grace might have known better!'

Jack stared at her like a wounded stag; then he uttered an abject apology, for which, however, he obtained no sort of a receipt. Lady Caroline had turned and was talking to some one else. But it was not this that cut him to the heart; it was her mode of addressing him, after their conversation of the early morning.

Somewhat later he remembered that railing voice, and the shutting of the window upstairs; and with a burning indignation he divined, all at once, who it was that had been so spoken to, and why, with the true cause of Olivia's indisposition.

This was in the darkness of his hut, with Livingston asleep in his lap. In another minute Jack was striding through the pines, on his way to the drawing-room for a few plain words with Lady Caroline Sellwood. He never had them. Lady Caroline was gone to bed. It was almost eleven; within an hour Claude would be back, and a moral certainty become an absolute fact. Hunt's tale was true. Had it been otherwise, Claude would have telegraphed. He had left, indeed, on the distinct understanding that he should do no such thing; his mission was to be kept a secret, and a telegram might excite suspicion; yet even so, he would have sent one had all been well. Jack was sure of it; his exhausted spirit had surrendered utterly to an ineluctable despair.

In this humour he sought the Poet's Corner,

* Copyright reserved in the United States of America.

and found its two *habitués* furtively chuckling over some newspaper. Their gaiety cut him to the quick, yet he longed to enter into it.

'What's the joke?' said Jack. 'I want something to make me laugh!'

'This wouldn't,' replied Edmund Stubbs; 'it's not benign enough for you.'

'It's only a piece of smart scribbling,' explained Llewellyn, lighting a fresh cigarette with the stump of the last.

Jack was behind them; quite innocently he put his head between theirs and looked for himself. The paper was the *Parthenon*. There was but one article on the open page. It was headed—

'OUR MINOR POETS:

XXVIII.—MR CLAUDE LAFONT.'

'So that amuses you?' said Jack at last.

'Quite,' said Llewellyn.

'You think it just, eh?'

'Oh, hang justice! It's awfully nice copy. That's all it has any right to be. Justice doesn't matter a hang; the *Parthenon*'s not written for the virtuous shopkeeper; it isn't meant to appeal to the Nonconformist Conscience.'

'Besides, the article is just,' protested Stubbs. 'We know what Lafont is, between ourselves; he's an excellent chap, but his poetry—save the mark!—would hardly impose upon Clapham and Wandsworth. His manner's cheap enough, but his matter goes one cheaper; it's the sort of thing for which there should be no charge.' Stubbs drained his glass.

Jack was blazing.

'I don't know what you mean by "cheap,"' he cried; 'but from reading that article, which I happen to have seen before, I should call it a jolly "cheap" word. I don't set up to be a clever man. I only know what I like, and I like everything of Claudie's that—that I can understand. But even if I didn't I should be sorry to go about saying so in his own house!'

'His own house!' exclaimed the Impressionist.

'We didn't know it was his,' said Stubbs.

'What's mine is Claude's,' replied Jack, colouring. 'It was before I turned up, and it will be again when—whenever I peg out.'

With that he was gone.

'Sounds suicidal,' remarked Llewellyn.

'Or celibate,' said Stubbs, replenishing his glass.

'Poor beast!' concluded the artist.

But here their host returned.

'I'm very sorry, you fellows,' said he, with absurd humility. 'I'm all off colour to-night, and I know I've made a rude ruffian of myself. Some of these days you'll understand; meantime, will you forgive me?'

'I have nothing to forgive,' replied Llewellyn.

'We'll say no more about it,' said Stubbs.

And Jack shook hands with them both before leaving them for good; then he hurried through the length of the building to the great conservatory, where Stebbings was putting out the lights. The conservatory was at that extreme of the Towers which the dog-cart would pass first. Here, too, was room and air for a man distraught. So Jack called out to Stebbings to leave the lights on longer.

'And light some more,' he added suddenly. 'Light up every lamp in the place! I shall stay here until Mr Lafont returns.'

'Yes, your Grace.'

'Stebbings!'

'Your Grace?'

'I beseech you, don't call me that again! I—I'm not used to it, Stebbings—any more than you're used to me,' added Jack inconsequently; and he fled into the grounds until the old man should be gone.

The night was very dark and heavy; clouds obscured the moon, shedding a fine rain softly upon drive and terrace. Jack raised his face, and a grateful sprinkling cooled its fever. He longed for a far heavier fall, with the ancient longing of those prehistoric days when a gray sky and an honest wetting were the rarest joys in life. Could he indeed return to that rough routine after all these weeks of aristocratic ease? The bushman might exchange his wideawake for a coronet, but could the peer go back to the bush? Time must show. The only question was whether Hunt had lied or told the truth; and the answer could not be much longer delayed. Already it was half-past eleven; there was the clang creeping lazily through the night, round quarter of a mile of intervening wall and half a hundred angles.

He would have gone down the drive to meet the dog-cart; but the night was too dark; and beside him blazed the great conservatory like a palace of fire. He entered it again, and now he had it to himself; the statues among the tree-ferns were his only companions. But in his absence old Stebbings had placed a little table with brandy and soda-water set out upon it; even the butler had seen and pitied his condition.

The third quarter struck. The sound just carried to the conservatory, for now the rain was heavier, and the rattle overhead warred successfully against all other noises. The dog-cart might drive by without Jack's hearing it. The suspense was horrible, but a surprise would be more horrible still. He was becoming unstrung; why should he not tune himself up with the brandy? His voluntary teetotalism was too absurd; he had made no promise, taken no pledge, but only a private pride in his self-discipline as it had gone on from day to day. Not a drop had he touched since that afternoon at Dover so long, so long ago! As he reckoned up the time, the forgotten lust possessed him; it had been even so on Carara, when the periodical need of a cheque would first steal over his lonely spirit. He thought now of those occasions and their results; he knew himself of old; but he was no longer the same man—resistance would be ridiculous now. He took another look at the night; then he filled a wine-glass with neat brandy—raised it—and impulsively dashed the whole upon the marble flags. The brandy widened in a shallow amber flood; the broken glass lay glittering under the lamps; and in Jack's ears the patter of the rain (which had never abated) broke out anew.

He could not account for his act; he did not know it for the culmination of an hysterical condition induced by twenty-four sleepless hours of unrelieved suspense. It was neither more nor less, and yet it enabled him to hold up his head once more; and as he did so, there—through the

swimming crystal walls—between a palm-tree and a Norfolk Island pine—were the two red eyes of the dog-cart dilating in the dark.

The great moment had come, and it was not so great after all. Jack's little outburst had left him strangely calm. He went to the door and hailed the dog-cart in a loud, cheery voice. The lamps stopped. Claude came within range of those in the conservatory, and shook himself on the steps. Then he entered, looking unusually healthy, but dripping still.

'A brute of a night for you,' said Jack apologetically. 'Take off that coat, and have some brandy. Mind where you go. I've had a spill.'

This was the reaction. Claude understood.

'Then you don't want to hear the news?'

'I know it. I've known it for hours.'

'That I can see you haven't. Listen to me. There was no English marriage. Give me your hand.'

It was limp and cold.

'You don't believe me,' said Claude severely.

Jack subsided in a chair.

'I can't!' he whispered; 'I can't!'

'You soon will. I wish to goodness I'd taken you with me to-day. Now listen; there was some truth in Hunt's story, but more lies. The marriage was a lie. There never was a marriage. There was something rather worse at the time, but a good deal better now. My grandfather patched it up, exactly as I thought. He packed my uncle out to Australia, and he settled two hundred a year on the Hunts, on the single condition of perpetual silence as to the connection between the two families. I've seen the covenant, and those are the very words. The condition has been broken after all these years. And the Hunts' income stops to-day.'

Jack had roused himself a little; he was no longer apathetic, but neither was he yet convinced.

'It seems a lot of money to hush up so small a matter,' he objected. 'Are they sure there was no more in it than that?'

'Maitland & Cripps? Perfectly sure; they've been paying that money for nearly forty years, and there's never been a hint at a marriage until now. Certainly there's none in the settlement. But to make assurance surer, young Maitland took a cab and drove off to see his father—who was a partner in '53, but has since retired—about the whole matter. And I took another cab, and drove straight to the old parish church facing the river at Chelsea. I found the clerk, and he showed me the marriage register, but there was no such marriage on that date (or any other) in that church: so why in any? One lie means dozens. Surely you'll agree with me there?'

'I must; it's only the money that sticks with me. It was such a case of paying through the nose. But what had old Maitland to say?'

'Everything,' cried Claude. 'He remembered the whole business perfectly, and even saying to my grandfather much what you're saying to me now. But I've told you the kind of man the old Duke was; he was a purist of the purists, besides being as proud as Lucifer, and a scandal so near home hit him, as you would say, in both eyes at once. He considered he got good value for his money when he hushed it up. They

showed me a letter in which he said as much. Young Maitland unearthed it after he had seen his father, and with it others of a later date, in which the Duke refused to revoke or even to curtail the allowance on the woman's death. That's all; but surely it's conclusive enough! Here we have a first-class firm of solicitors on the one hand, and a clumsy scoundrel on the other. Which do you believe? By the way, they're anxious to prosecute Hunt on all sorts of grounds if you'll let them.'

'I won't.'

'I think you ought to,' said Claude.

'No, no; too much mud has been stirred up already; we'll let it rest for a bit.'

'But surely you'll get rid of the Hunts after this?'

'I'll see.'

Claude was disappointed; he had looked for a different reception of his news.

'Do you mean to say you're not convinced yet?' he cried.

'No,' said Jack, 'I'm quite satisfied now; you hem the thing in on every side. But I wish to heaven all this had never happened!'

'So do we all; but if there was a doubt, surely it was best to set it at rest. If I were you I should feel as one does after a bad dream.'

Jack was on his feet.

'My dear old mate,' he cried, 'and so I do! But I'm only half woke up; that's what's the matter with me, and you must give me time to pull myself together. You don't know what a day I've had; you never will know. And you—my meat's your poison, and yet you've been doing all this for me just as if it was the other way round; and not a word of thanks at the end of it. Claude—old man—forgive me! Thanks won't do. They're no good at all in a case like this. What can a fellow say? If it was you, you'd say plenty.'

'I hope not,' interrupted Claude, laughing. 'Wait till you do me a good turn. You've done me many a one already, and I've never said a word.'

But Jack would shake hands, and even Claude's face was shining with a kindly light as a soft step fell upon the marble, and Lady Caroline Sellwood entered from the drawing-room. The door had been left open. But it was instantly evident that her Ladyship had not been eaves-dropping, or at least not to any useful purpose; for she planted herself before the two men in obvious ignorance as to which was the man for her. She was still in the handsome dress that she had worn all the evening, and between her plump, white, glittering fingers she nursed the purple smoking-cap that had always been—and was still—intended for the Duke of St Osmund's.

'It was no good,' she cried tragically, looking from Claude to Jack, and back again at Claude. 'I simply couldn't go to bed until I knew. And now—and now I'm torn two ways; for pity's sake put me out of one misery.'

'It's all up,' said Jack deliberately. He owed Lady Caroline a grudge for the shrill scolding he had heard upstairs, and another for Olivia's absence from the dinner-table. He was also anxious to see what Lady Caroline would do.

She sailed straight to Claude, holding the smoking-cap at arm's-length.

'My dear, dear Claude! *How* I congratulate you! I find after all that the smoking-cap, which was originally intended'—

'Dear Lady Caroline,' interposed Claude hastily, 'everything is as it was. Hunt's story is a complete fabrication; I'd no idea that you knew anything about it.'

'I couldn't help telling Lady Caroline,' said Jack.

Lady Caroline turned upon him with hot suspicion.

'You said it was all'—

He interrupted her.

'I was going to say that it was all up with Hunt. He loses two hundred a year for his pains.'

'Is that possible?' cried her Ladyship.

'It's the case,' said Claude; 'so everything is as it was and as it should be.'

Lady Caroline exhibited no further trace of her discomfiture.

'I wish we hadn't all interrupted each other,' she laughed. 'I was about to remark that the smoking-cap, which was originally intended to have what one may term a frieze, as well as a dado, of gold lace, will look much better without the frieze, so there's really no more to do to it. Take it, my dear, dear Jack, and wear it sometimes for my sake. And forgive a mother for what was said about Olivia's ride. Claude, I shall make another cap for you; meanwhile, let me congratulate you—again—on your noble conduct of to-day. Ah, you neither of you congratulate me on mine! Yet I am a woman, and I've kept your joint secret—most religiously—from nine in the morning to this very hour!'

A NIGHT IN AN EEL-SETT.

By E. R. SUFFLING,
Author of *The Land of the Broad's*, &c.

EAST ANGLIA stands pre-eminent among fishing districts for its output of the nutritious and toothsome eel—not that it cannot quite hold its own in several other products, corn, butter, and geese being among them; whilst as a set-off against these it has been trying for a couple of centuries to make a sample of eatable cheese, and has not yet met with the success which is always supposed to reward those who work and wait.

Let us look for a little at the East Anglian mode of eel-catching, and at the same time endeavour to learn a little about the fish itself. And this can perhaps best be done by visiting what is termed an 'eel-sett' or eel-station.

Picture a flat, uninteresting country, in which, on either side of a broad, sluggish river, marshes stretch away to the horizon, with here and there a few desolate trees and fewer isolated cottages, about one human being to the square mile, and you will have a fair idea of the district between Yarmouth and Acle on the river Bure.

But we sail onward for several miles beyond the old stone bridge at Acle until the river becomes fringed with tall, sighing reeds, boulders, and sedges; while the adjoining marshes, with their teeming herds of cattle, become much more picturesque by reason of the woods and plantations which now limit the horizon, and serve as wind-screens to numerous distant villages,

whose square church towers peep from their sylvan surroundings.

More human life is seen both ashore and afloat; while hard by the left bank of the river stands the grand old gate-house of St Benet's Abbey, through which is thrust the red brick tower of a colossal windmill, which, from sheer age itself, forms a picturesque ruin.

The gateway and mill-tower somehow always suggest an old valentine, in which an arrow is depicted thrust through a heart—a poetic sentiment emblematic of love. The gate and mill are, however, shorn of sentiment, and simply suggest life as symbolised by the very necessary staff of life—corn.

As we glide along we notice on the right bank a curious beamy old boat drawn high and dry upon the river-bank, and in the boat has been built an upstanding cabin, which occupies some eight feet of its total length of twelve feet, making it look an exact miniature representation of Noah's ark. It is as black and as watertight as manifold coats of tar can make it, and by the door, which looks out upon the river, stands its owner, his tanned 'slop' (or blouse) shaking in the wind, while his shapeless felt hat is so drawn down over his eyes that his bronzed features are nearly hidden, except where the last rays of the setting sun just catch his red nose and tangled wealth of flaxen beard.

'Hallo, master!' comes his cheery voice across the wind-swept water. 'Why, I certainly thout yu worn't a-comin', but I see yu've had a kinder stiff tide agin' yer. Never mind, bor! better late than niver!'

I apologise for being an hour late—it is 7 P.M. instead of 6—and mooring my little *Argo* to the river's wall, step ashore and into the sett of my old friend the eel-catcher.

Tea is already made, and in a twinkling a pound of such sausages as one rarely tastes outside of Norfolk are frizzling tunefully in the frying-pan.

While they cook, making merry music to the ear of a hungry man, let me glance around the little cabin in which I sit.

Eight feet by seven; and a short man will bump his head if he attempts to stand upright. On each side a locker-bed, with straw palliasses and woollen rugs, and at the far end a little iron cooking-stove and a heterogeneous lumber of pots and pans; on a side shelf several plates, cups, and saucers in various stages of dilapidation. Above the opposite side berth hangs an ancient muzzle-loading gun, and on either side of the doorway are hanging cupboards containing more wonderful old china, bread, cheese, eggs, tobacco, powder, shot, old pipes, and what-not. Add a lumbering pair of hip-boots, a cat, an axe, sundry bottles, a few odd articles, and an ancient and fish-like smell which permeates the place, and the picture of the interior is complete, except that we see each other as through a glass darkly, by reason of the smoke, which disdains to go by the way assigned it, and forsaking the chimney, leaves reluctantly by the door.

Tea over, the aching void of an eight hours' fast being filled, and the creature man made comfortable, we turn to eels as an absorbing topic; and for fear my readers are not sufficiently grounded in dead languages to understand the

niceties of the Norfolk dialect, my old friend's conversation shall be reduced to modern English.

But before indulging in miscellaneous chat upon eels, I will endeavour to describe an eel-net as used in East Anglian waters.

The general appearance is similar to an ordinary trawl-net, but the meshes are, of course, very small. The mouth of the eel-net is weighted at the foot by a chain which sinks it into the mud, and the upper rope is just sufficiently buoyed with corks as to keep the mouth open and no more. This is done because in a navigable river, where vessels of considerable draught are frequently passing up and down, a floating top rope would become entangled between the stern post and rudder, and the whole net displaced and torn.

The top rope is therefore made of sufficient length to reach to either bank, and being fastened to stakes driven into the earth, is thus kept taut until a vessel approaches, when, if it be of fair draught, the eelman loosens one end of the top rope, which sags and sinks so that the vessel may pass over without entanglement, when it is again hauled taut and fishing resumed.

The net is tarred, and from the huge mouth rapidly diminishes to some three feet in diameter, whence it is continued in a long tail kept open by wooden hoops.

Between the hoops are 'return-pieces' of net forming a series of 'pockets' to prevent the return and escape of the eels.

Finally, the net ends in a long narrow 'cod-piece' of very fine mesh, which, when fairly freighted with eels, can be detached and a fresh 'cod-piece' fastened on.

Such a net is simple and most effective as a trap, few of the eels which once enter ever getting out again.

After a chat we turned out of the warm cabin, about 10 P.M., into the steady downpour of rain, which increased as the wind dropped. It was not a particularly cheery turn-out; but as I had come to see, hear, and learn all I could, I donned my mackintosh and stepped into the frail reed-boat by the bank.

'Just the night for them,' quoth Piscator as he shoved from the bank; 'plenty of thunder and rain and a good breeze of wind will make them run in shoals.'

The poke of the net was hauled up, and sure enough the prophet had spoken correctly, for as the end was hauled in, a phosphorescent mass of eels bulged and swayed the net in their eagerness to escape from the durance in which they found themselves.

Off came the 'cod-piece' and on went another: a process taking but a short time to perform, although the glass lantern with its feeble candle shed but a faint light on the work.

'One goes by feel as much as by sight,' replies my friend in response to my wonder at his dexterous movements.

Ashore again. The heavy poke of eels is dumped down among the wringing wet grass, and the eel-trunk drawn from the water in which it is moored by a length of chain. The trunk is simply a huge rectangular deal box, pierced full of small holes, in which the eels are deposited until the collecting boat comes round and purchases the supply.

The small door of the trunk is opened, and the mouth of the net being thrust in, the fish are shaken out, and squirm and squeeze about like a party of delirious waltzers, making a peculiar squeaking and flopping noise as they writhe and struggle for freedom; but although they know it not, 'Abandon hope, all ye who enter here,' is the unuttered quotation as the fisher pegs the lid down, and once more slides the trunk down the muddy bank into the silent black water.

It is a long, black, wet and gusty night, and once or twice the monotony of the vigil is broken by a husky hail as the huge black sail of a wherry looms up through the night, and, passing, fades away again into the darkness like some relative of the 'Flying Dutchman.' At such times the shore end of the top rope is slackened, and the wherry passes freely over, as a voice exclaims, 'What cheer, mate? How do they run?'

'Mustn't grumble,' is the reply. 'Good-night.'

And then in we turn again, and smoke, and chat, and blink at each other; while I, not being used to such all-night-sittings, occasionally give such an ample yawn that I am in fear of lockjaw or splitting the corners of my mouth.

'How many eels do you think you emptied into the trunk last haul?' I query.

'About two stone and a half,' is the reply; 'but later we shall get double that quantity.' And so we did.

'Do you ever put down your net without catching any eels?'

'Well, no; but a fortnight since I only caught 18 lb. in five nights, but that was when there was a full moon. Usually at full moon it is useless to try for eels—they will not run then; but the best time is on dark nights when there are electric disturbances in the air, and a nice rain. At such times I have seen eels crawling through the long wet grass a hundred yards from the nearest water.'

'Dear me!' I exclaim, 'and are eels, in your opinion, as tenacious of life as some persons affirm?'

'Why, master, an eel has more life in it than even a cat, and that, you know, is hard to kill. I've known eels to be frozen stiff, and to be buried in snow for days, and yet when I've put them into water they have thawed and recovered.'

'Many a time I have dug them out of the frozen mud at the river-side when the tide has gone down, and they have been so hard that I could not get them apart from the mud without breaking them, yet when I have thawed them in water they have become as lively as ever.'

'Can you form any idea how long an eel will live?' was my next question.

'I cannot, of course, tell what is the usual time they will live naturally—unless they meet with sudden death in the stew-pan—but my father kept an eel for nearly thirty years, so you see they are not short-lived fish like the herring or the sprat.'

'I'll tell you another thing, master; eels can be tamed. I have two at home which I have kept in a tank for more than two years, and they will come to the surface when I tap on the rim, and will feed out of my hand, taking shreds of meat or worms greedily.'

Now it came to my turn to add an item or

two to the general fund of knowledge. I asked my old friend if eels had scales, to which he replied :

'Maybe the very old ones have, but not the young ones.'

I was able to put him right in this matter by assuring him that all eels have scales, but of a very fine and delicate kind, and so covered with an outer skin of a gelatinous nature that one has to look very carefully to discover them.

Then we chatted about the size of eels.

'How heavy is the large one I saw in the trunk?' I demanded; for I had noticed one quite a yard long, looking like a man-of-war among a fishing fleet.

'He would go about four to four and a half pounds; but I once caught two the same night, each of which took down an eight-pound weight when I put them on the scales. They were big fellows, and I do not think many have been caught larger.'

At this I smiled, and gave him the record of several of over twenty pounds. Years ago several were caught in the Medway scaling from twenty to thirty pounds, and Frank Buckland mentions one from the same river of thirty-two pounds. Even this enormous weight was eclipsed by a mammoth eel taken at Wisbeach (in Norfolk) only a couple of years since. It was upwards of six feet long, and weighed thirty-seven pounds! 'How is that for a stew?'

'Well,' mused my companion, 'some folks may like them that size, but give me a half-pounder, which is just when the fish is in its prime for stewing. But of course for "collaring" the large eels are best, and command a higher price.'

'What do we sell them at?' Well, we sell by the stone of fourteen pounds, but when they arrive at Billingsgate they are sold by the draught of sixteen pounds.

'Taking big with little, we eelmen realise from five to six shillings a stone; but few eels leave Billingsgate under eightpence per pound, and they are retailed by the fishmongers at from ninepence to fifteenpence per pound, so you see there is a large margin between what we receive and what the consumer pays for them. Perhaps by-and-by, if the Great Eastern Railway assist us as they do the farmers and poultry-rearers, we may be able to place eels on the breakfast-table of those who are fond of the nutritious fish at from sixpence to sevenpence per pound.'

'Do you know,' I asked, 'that the eel is a most prolific fish?'

Evidently mistaking the meaning of my query, he replied :

'Prolific! I should think so. Why, I have found all sorts of odd things in the stomachs of the large ones—birds, a young duck, small fish, rats, mice, and large quantities of fish spawn. Whether they swallow these things while they are alive or after they are dead I cannot say; but all these things and many more I have taken out of two and three pound eels.'

Then I explained what I meant by prolific—bearing a large quantity of spawn.

'A four-pound eel is known to contain upwards of five million eggs!'

'Lor, master, that *may* be true, but how can any mortal man count them? Why, I once read that if a man were to count a hundred a minute for

ten hours a day, he would take sixteen and a half days to reach a million. But how could he see them, let alone count them?'

'Easily enough,' I reply; 'it is done in this way: carefully empty the spawn of a large fish into a basin; wash and separate it, and lay it out to dry upon a large sheet of glass. Turn and move it about, and when dry carefully weigh it. Then, suppose the total mass weighs eight ounces, you may take sufficient to weigh, say, a single grain, and placing the eggs under a powerful microscope, proceed to count them very carefully. Having ascertained the number in a grain, multiply that number by four hundred and thirty-seven (grains in an ounce), and the result gives the total number of ova in the fish. That is one way of counting, but there are several other methods employed.'

Thus we chatted while the rain drove down, and, despite the thick coatings of tar upon the sett, found its way into the interior by many a little unseen orifice and puncture in the decayed wood. Still, we were very snug, and varied the monotony of the long night-watch by turning out at intervals to haul up the net-tail and place the catch in the huge trunk.

Very few other fish found their way into the poke of the net, and the small bream, roach, and rudd which did make the tarry twine their temporary prison were unceremoniously pitched back into their own element when the 'cod-piece' was brought ashore.

Not a sound broke the utter silence of the night, save the ceaseless his-s-s-s of the wind as it swayed the tall reeds in its steady flight across the bleak and dismal marshes; but at dawn the pewit and the lark arose, the curlew gave its peculiar cry, the distant baying of farm-yard 'jowlers' was heard, cattle began to low, and with the rising sun came the first wherry, its great tanned sail glistening with the morning dew, for it had long since ceased raining.

Now the great net is drawn ashore and hung up to dry upon tall stakes; the fire is lighted in the little stove, and soon the smell of frying eels and hot coffee proclaims that we break our fast and commence another day—I by sailing back to Yarmouth, and my old friend to sleep the sleep of the tired toiler whose bread is earned while the world sleeps.

To bring this short article on the eel up to date, it may interest naturalist readers to know that Professor Grassi, the learned Italian scientist, has made such important discoveries relating to the spawning of the eel that the Royal Society of London has presented him with the Darwin medal in recognition of his services to natural history.

From the days of Aristotle to the present time, it has been a moot point as to whether the eel brought forth its young alive, or whether they were hatched after the operation of spawning had taken place.

Many savants advocated the former theory, on the ground that an eel had never been seen to spawn; but during his researches in the deep currents of the Straits of Messina, Professor Grassi has set the matter at rest by proving that the young fish are hatched after the spawn is ejected. He states that the common fresh-water or river eel spawns at the bottom of the sea, and

that the female can only carry out the operation at great depths. The eggs are not laid on the bed of the ocean, but float midway to the surface, and are there hatched, a proceeding which takes place from August to January.

The young eels appear at first like tiny, round glass rods a couple of inches long, and are perfectly colourless, even in their blood. By-and-by they flatten somewhat in form, and actually contract in length, and the blood and bile become coloured; a slight pigment permeates the little body, and in due time they take the form of small eels, or elvers, being then about two and a half inches in length. At one year old—in their elver state—they ascend the rivers, and there commence their lives as eels as we know them.

TRAPPED BY THE APACHE INDIANS.

ANY one who can tell a good yarn is in great request in the camp of a West Texas cattle ranche, and there was no one we liked so well to listen to as old Steve Jackson. He had seen so much of the seamy side of frontier life, used to tell his stories in a way which always convinced his audience of their truth, and there was such a total absence of exaggeration about everything the white-headed old man said, that I think I cannot do better than endeavour to repeat one of his own stories, in his own words, as he told it to us, sitting and smoking round the camp-fire at Jake Rustler's headquarter ranche.

STEVE'S YARN.

I.

'Well, fellows! when I was listening the other day to some of you talking about Injuns, I couldn't help sort of larking to myself to hear you argyfyng that Injuns is a badly-used lot. I noticed it was mostly the youngsters, and Jack Monroe [my poor self], who, of course, ain't been long from England, and can't be expected to know much about a cow or a Injun, that was in favour of treating Apaches and Comanches just as if they was high-toned white gentlemen that had been "cruelly wronged of their ancestral privileges," as I once read in a Eastern newspaper.

'I tell you, boys, Apaches is worse than wolves, and Comanches is something like a inferior quality of jackal.

'When I was a young man, which ain't so very many years ago, though my wool is white, I thought I would like to make my pile quicker than I could staying on the old farm, so me and a boy named Jim Slater left home, and took the train westward to San Antonio; there was no line built farther west in them days. I had heard the place spoken of as the "Terminus of the Sunset Line," and was so blamed ignorant as to think there was no country beyond, and that San Antonio was the "jumping-off place," at the very end of the world; so you may guess I was astonished when I got there to find big wagons, each drawn by fourteen little rats of Mexican mules, being loaded with grub and cotton goods to be hauled to Presidio del Norte, which they said was five hundred miles farther west, way up the Rio Grande River, where there was a town full of Mexicans and a few 'cute Americans,

who were making their fortunes trading with the smugglers from Old Mexico.

'Josh Burgess, the fellow in charge of one wagon train, with a hundred and fifty mules and ten wagons to it, offered to take me and Jim along with him, if we'd work for our grub and promise to fight like blazes if the Injuns tackled us.

'There was about twenty of us altogether, mostly Mexicans and half-breeds, and we had a considerable lot of trouble with the Injuns on the road, but didn't happen to meet up with any very big gang of them, so managed to reach Presidio with only the loss of two men, one wagon, and a dozen mules. But the Injun stories them Mexicans told me about torturing, and cutting off scalps before white people was dead, kept me oneasy a good many nights, and I used to wake up and feel my head—which had black hair on it in them days—just to make sure my scalp was in its right place.

'But I told you once before all about that trip, so I'll just hurry on and let you know what happened a few months later.

'When Jim and I got to Presidio del Norte, we found it was easy enough for a white man to make his pile there, if he had a decentish lot to start on; but with only fifty or sixty dollars each, we couldn't do no more than the "greasers" could, so we joined one of the smuggling gangs, and continued to drift westwards to Chihuahua, in Old Mexico. They've got a railway there now, and hundreds of "gringos"—as they've got the cheek to call good American citizens—live there; but thirty years ago it was a regular Mexican town.

'We had picked up a little of their durned language, and the yarns them greasers told us about mining prospects in the Sierra Madre mountains, two hundred miles farther west, made Jim and me think, if we could ever get there, we should find gold about as plentiful as coal in Pennsylvania, and silver wouldn't be considered worth picking up. Only, the country was thick with Apache Injuns, and the odds agin us ever returning was considerable. I suppose we was struck with gold fever, for we decided to go and take our chances, hoping, of course, to bring back a few bushels of the yellow metal.

II.

'Jim had a good old Long Tom army rifle, and I had a new Winchester and plenty of cartridges, so all we had to buy was a couple of mules, a coffee-pot, frying-pan, and a little grub.

'During the first few days we passed several Mexican ranches, but when we had left Chihuahua about a hundred and fifty miles behind us, the country changed a good deal. We were reaching the foot-hills of the Sierra Madres, and I never saw a finer grazing country, but black-tail deer was about the only animals to make use of it.

'The Mexicans had often tried ranching there, but they were killed out, and their wives, children, and cattle stolen by the Apaches.

'We tried to be very careful, only lighting small fires and keeping a good look-out; but it was more good luck than good management which saved us, as at that time, though we didn't know it, almost all the Apache braves were away making a big murdering and stealing raid in the state of Durango, farther south.

'As we got higher up the mountains we saw bits of old ruins, which showed us there must have been civilised people living there hundreds of years ago, and twice we came across old, worked-out silver-mines, more like large rabbit-warrens than anything else; but we didn't see the gold and silver we expected to find so plentiful, and I know neither of us would have known a rich lead if we had found one, though we used to chip off bits of rock, and look mighty wise, and shake our heads now and then.

'We had now got to the far side of the Sierras, looking towards the Pacific slope, and had wandered about the mountains for two or three weeks. There were lots of elk, bear, and blacktails up there, so that we had plenty of meat; but our beans and corn had played out, and we had about come to the conclusion that as prospectors we was a dead failure, and had better go back to farming, or try our hand at shooting buffalo in the Pan Handle, or cow punching in Kansas—for Kansas wasn't given over to grangering in them days, you know, boys—farmers hadn't got that far west; but it so happened we got into a bit of trouble, which turned my hair gray in a few weeks, and almost drove poor Jim stiring mad.

'We was following up an old trail, which looked as if it had not been used for a hundred years; it was by far the deepest-worn trail we had come across, and in places the water had washed it out into what looked more like a creek-bed. After following it a mile or two, it led us into the mouth of a deep cañon, and the fallen rocks and timber made it impossible for us to ride farther.

'We had often heard tell of "cliff-dwellers," and we decided that, as this old path evidently didn't lead out on to the top of the mountain, it must be a way of getting to some of them old Injun headquarters, which, as you know, was generally located in the caves in the highest cliffs the blamed old fools could find.

'I was curious to see what the place was like, so we unsaddled and hid the mules in the brush. It was a pretty stiff climb, and it was the most infernal-looking cañon ever I seen—almost dark at the bottom, with the cliffs each side towering hundreds of feet above us.

'At last the trail seemed to stop abruptly; we had reached the end of the cañon, and a high cliff faced us, the sides of which were perpendicular, and we failed to see what object any one could have had in getting to such a miserable dark place.

'I felt as if we were in a trap, and if any Injuns had been about they could have done anything they liked with us, so I proposed we should hurry back, and never make such durned idiots of ourselves again; but Jim said, "Hold hard! can't you see sort of steps cut in the face of the rock, and don't you see a small hole away up near the top?" It was true enough, and though I felt sort of scared and a bit giddy several times, we managed to climb up, sometimes on ledges of rock, and sometimes with the help of the rough steps.

'The hole was far bigger than it looked from below, and from the entrance to it there were twenty or thirty more steps leading to the very top of the sierra.

'We expected to find all sorts of Injun remains up there, but didn't find a single thing, except a couple of iron bars. I wanted to get away as quick as we could, and try and get back to

whar the mules was before dark; but I never saw Jim so excited; he seemed as if he had gone clean mad, and kept dancing about like a crazy man.

"You are a fool, Steve," says he. "Can't you see, man, the Indians never lived here, but they've been mining here, and you may bet your bottom dollar this is a bonanza, or they would never have cut all them steps."

'We had no candles, so couldn't see very far in; but we began breaking off bits of rock all over the inside of the cave, and bringing them to the entrance to examine. It all looked like ordinary stone, however, until I brought out a chunk of grayish stuff from a small upright shaft at the very end of a little passage through which I had crawled on my hands and knees, and sure enough we could see traces of native gold in it. Jim set up a shout that would have brought the Injuns on us, if there had been any within a mile; but we could do no more that evening, so climbed up the steps to the top of the mesa [mountain], and hurried back to hunt up the place where we had left the mules. We had a good deal of trouble finding a way down, but we did manage it just as it was getting dark.

'We sat up half that night making plans what to do with the pile we was perfectly sure we would soon make. My idea was to start a faro bank or a big saloon in Kansas City—which was only a little "cow-town" then—and Jim said he'd buy a few thousand cattle, and just sit down and watch himself growing into a millionaire.

III.

'Next morning, however, we realised we had a good deal of work to do before carrying out the comfortable plans made the night before. Nearly the whole day was spent trying to find a way for the mules up the mesa; and at last we had to give it up, so we hobbled out the mules near a spring at the entrance to the cañon, and carried our crowbars, spades, rifles, blankets, and dried meat up the mesa, where we made our camp amongst the fir right at the very top, and close to the steps leading down to the cave.

'We made a stock of fir torches, and did a little work that night; but the only sign we could see of any gold was at the spot where I had found a trace the day before, and it was next to impossible to work there, as, besides being so narrow, the vein seemed to end abruptly at the height of our heads, and only to continue upwards where we could not reach. So we were no richer that night when we rolled in between the blankets than we were the night before, and did not feel half so hilarious.

'As I lay awake I thought of a plan; and next day we measured, as near as we could, the distance from the cave entrance to the rich vein if taken in a straight line; then let a rope down over the top of the cliff to the entrance of the cave, and in this way were able to locate fairly exactly where we should start work on the top of the mesa, so as to dig downwards to the gold vein.

'So we started digging away at the top of the mountain, one of us working in the shaft, and the other drawing up the earth in a rough kind of basket we made out of thin fir branches.

'Well! we was getting along first-rate, and had found several small nuggets of gold, when one day I was at the bottom of the shaft, which now looked like a well about thirty feet deep, and

shouted up to Jim to climb down the rope and join me, as I was kinder doubtful whether we was working exactly in the right direction or not. He came down, and we were busy examining the sides of the shaft, when we was startled by a fiendish laugh above our heads, and looking up, saw the faces of three Injuns looking down at us. We felt completely paralysed. "Trapped, by gum!" said poor Jim; and I could feel him tremble as I caught his hand.

"We thought the Injuns would at once put an end to us by rolling stones down on us, and we said good-bye to each other; and I began to think of my old mammy a thousand miles away, and to wish I'd been a kind of a religiouser chap all my life; but, bless you, I didn't know the Apaches in them days as I do now, my boys. The fun was only just commencing for them devils.

"They kept shouting out, and telling something which we couldn't understand, until two or three more of their comrades joined them, and they all leant over the entrance laughing and jeering at us. One of the new-comers at last spoke to us in Spanish, which he could talk a good deal better than we could, having, I suppose, been taken captive at one time by the Mexicans. He made a long speech, evidently full of durned sarcasm, and said we were very brave and enterprising to come so far from home in search of gold. He said they intended to encourage our love of work, and told us we might continue to send up our buckets full of dirt, as long as there was plenty of gold with it to make it worth while for him and his friends to wait and pull the stuff up; and he let us know that when we could find no more gold our scalps and skins would be useful to them.

"There was nothing for it but to pitch in and work.

"They threw food down to us occasionally, but the beasts would only give us raw meat, in spite of us begging them to cook it, and saying we could work all the harder if well fed.

"At first we was both feeling absolutely hopeless, and our only choice seemed to be death by starvation if we refused to eat; or to work on till we could find no more gold, and then be tortured to death by those wretches above our heads.

"But there was the cave somewhere below, and if we could only work our way down to it, there was the bare possibility of our escaping that way.

"Those Injuns must truly have thought white men loved hard work, for never did two fellows work as we did; but day after day went by; we were getting to feel worn out, cramped, and stiff; the beastly raw meat they used to chuck down to us made us feel terribly sick and ill; and, worse than all, we began to fear we had missed the cave and were now below its level.

"We must have sent up thousands of dollars' worth of gold for those brutes to make belts and necklaces of.

"On the ninth day things was getting desperate; the Injuns told us they had got no gold from the stuff in the basket for the last twenty or thirty heaves, and as they supposed the rich pocket was now worked out, they began to prepare for a big feast to celebrate our sacrifice.

"All this time we had been working in the dark,

and the terror of torture and death, the horrible food and incessant work, added to the darkness, had reduced us to a deplorable condition. Poor Jim was often delirious, and I feared he would go raving mad.

"Somehow I never quite despaired, though I felt very ill and my body was covered with sores.

"I begged them to let us have a torch, so that we could see the colour of the earth, and try and find the lead we had missed.

"They, of course, wanted more gold if they could get it, so threw us down a flaring pine knot, and we eagerly looked about us. On one side, about three feet from the bottom of the shaft, I saw the earth was of a grayish colour, similar to what we had found in the cave, so went to work in that direction, Jim holding the torch. Even by that dim light, I saw my pick strike something shiny, and when the bucket went up there were yells of delight from the Injuns.

"This was late in the evening, but they made us go on working hour after hour through the night, so long as we could keep on sending up such stuff.

"I don't know how many hours we had been hard at it, taking it by turns, when my pick struck a chunk of gold as big as my fist, and this, with several other smaller ones surrounding it, we stuffed into our pockets, quickly filling up the basket with the first stuff we could lay hands on.

"Nothing could stop my work now; I was stiff, sore, and tired, but I felt I was near the cave, and at last, when I drove the pick home with all my force, a mass of earth fell around us and disclosed an open space. Jim couldn't keep quiet; he lost his head completely, and started yelling like a maniac; so I knocked out the light, and told him I would kill him with the pick-axe if he didn't shut up. Then the Injuns shouted from above, to know what was up, and I said I had accidentally struck Jim's eye with the pick, and that he had dropped the light. They only laughed, and said that would leave but one of Jim's eyes for them to have the pleasure of burning out, but they said I must be careful of both mine, so as not to rob them of their fun.

"They said they had no more torches handy, so chucked us down a haunch of roast venison, and told us to eat, sleep, and grow strong for to-morrow's work.

"Jim was now quite sobered. We quickly tore the good food to pieces, and ate like wolves the first cooked meat we had seen for many days. After about half-an-hour's anxious listening, we could hear no more sounds from the Indian camp, so let ourselves through the new opening as carefully as possible. It was pitch-dark, but we recognised the passage at the end of the cave, and crawled cautiously out to the blessed fresh air.

"It was terrible work scrambling down the steep cliff, for the steps were few and far between, and not easy to manage even in daylight. At last, however, we reached the cañon alive, and without broken limbs, though a good deal torn and bleeding. We did not expect pursuit until the morning, but a man feels very helpless without a gun or a horse.

'If only we could get down the cañon and find our hobbled mules; but there seemed scarcely any chance of that in such inky darkness, even if the Injuns had not long ago found them and driven them off.

IV.

'At last we got to the mouth of the cañon, and were surprised to find how light the night was in the open country. There were bright stars, and now the moon burst through the clouds.

'We walked silently about, peering eagerly at every half-seen object, but could find no trace of the mules.

'We had half made up our minds to start eastward on foot, though we felt the chances of them blamed Injuns following our tracks, and overtaking us before we could be twenty miles away, were a thousand to one.

"Listen!" said Jim; "I believe I heard a horse nickering."

'I thought it was his fancy, but we pushed eagerly in the direction he said the sound came from, and had not walked six hundred yards, when we came in sight of a herd of forty or fifty horses, mules, and donkeys grazing quietly in the moonlight, and a short distance off were the three Injuns, who were, I suppose, in charge of them, sitting round a fire dozing or talking.

'Well, you know, boys, it ain't easy to sneak up to a herd of horses in the dark, and the more sly and silent you are, the more likely they are to stampede; but the slightest noise would, of course, make the Injuns look round.

'Three of the horses was staked out, and luckily they were nearer to us than to the fellows in charge, and we had got quite close up to them, when one snorted, and away went the whole bunch as hard as they could go. It was lucky them three was fastened with good strong ropes, for, as you know, a frightened horse would run to the end of his rope, and pretty nearly throw himself down, no matter how gentle he might be. The Injuns rushed towards us like lightning, and we had only just time to cut all three ropes, jump on the backs of the two best-looking nags, and dash away. A couple of arrows whistled by our heads, but we fled like the wind, and in a few seconds were well out of their range.

'We paid no attention to the direction we were taking, but, naturally enough, our horses followed the stampeded bunch, and soon overtook them.

'Jim was pretty crazy a few hours before, but he was surely smart enough now. "Steve," said he, "if we take the whole blessed herd with us, them rascals will be afoot, and can't follow very quick, and maybe we can sell the plugs for a few dollars, if ever we reach Chihuahua."

'So we drove the whole lot as hard as we could gallop, straight east, for we could now see the first sign of coming daylight.

'I don't think I ever saw two better ponies than the ones we were riding. I've often wondered about it since, for Injuns generally use the most played-out, sore-backed plugs they have for night-herding their saddle stock on; but I suppose these two must have been recently stolen from some ranch, for they were evidently corn-fed ponies, and the Apaches would know well enough they would be hard to keep from straying back if not kept tied up close.

'We did not slack our pace at all till we had placed a good dozen miles between the gentlemen we had been lately working for and ourselves; but we felt pretty safe now, and just jogged along steady-like all day.

'Well, boys, to make a long story short, we never saw any more of the Injuns at close quarters, though we caught sight of a lot of them once far behind us, crossing a big alkali flat, and probably riding a few donkeys and old plugs, which we had found too lazy or weak to keep up, and had allowed to drop behind before we had run many miles.

'On the second evening we reached a Mexican ranch, put the bunch into the pen, caught up a fresh saddle-horse each, and swapped a couple of mules for two saddles, for we were feeling sore, and I never did like riding bare-back for choice.

'We ate everything the greasers could put before us, and after resting a few hours, continued to push on towards Chihuahua, which we reached without no more trouble after another three days' riding.

'I've sometimes seen fellows look pretty tolerable tough after a hard trail drive, but I never saw any such sorry sight as Jim. I was almost ashamed to go into Chihuahua with him, but he told me I looked worse.

'Our hair was long and matted with blood and dirt; we had each about three inches of dirty-looking beard and whiskers.

'Our faces was black as niggers; we were both just simply skin and bones; and the rags we had on us were simply ondecient.

'I never did enjoy a wash, shave, and change like that time.

'We sold all the horses except the two which saved our lives; got five hundred good Mexican dollars for the chunks of gold we had saved, and dressed ourselves up like blooming Mexican Dons. I got drunk too, boys; but perhaps I needn't have told you that, because you all know well enough old Steve Jackson could have made his pile a dozen times over if he hadn't been so cussed fond of rye-whisky.

'I only met Jim once since. He was "tending bar" in a saloon at El Paso, and ain't no better off than the rest of us.'

A NEW DEPARTURE IN WINE PRODUCTION.

By G. C. FRANKLAND.

SOME two years ago a certain Dr Sauer made the astonishing announcement that he had been able, by means of a method which he had discovered, to obtain a yield of alcohol from a fermenting solution amounting to between sixteen and seventeen per cent. Now, as hitherto the highest yield which had been procured only reached some thirteen per cent., great curiosity was not unnaturally exhibited in this discovery, whilst not a little scepticism was expressed as to its reliability.

The difficulty of raising the percentage of alcohol seemed insurmountable, for the simple reason that when the quantity of this ingredient

present exceeded the customary thirteen per cent. or so, the producer of the alcohol—that is, the living yeast cells—could not maintain their existence, and consequently the whole process was brought to a standstill.

How, then, had Dr Sauer been able to overcome or circumvent this apparent inherent prejudice of the all-important fermenting organism to an excessive amount of alcohol in its surroundings?

As is well known, this idiosyncrasy of yeast cells has necessitated the so-called 'fortifying' of wines, like sherries, with alcohol from other sources, to supply the deficiency in the amount present after the completion of the ordinary process of fermentation.

Dr Sauer's device is as simple as it is ingenious. He takes a twenty per cent. solution of must, and sterilises it—that is, banishes all traces of bacterial life by heat; he then warms it to about 122 degrees Fahrenheit, and sows it with lactic acid bacteria. The introduction of these lactic bacteria is the key to the whole process. When these microbes have well established themselves, and have produced a certain quantity of lactic acid, their activity is brought to a close by the whole solution being heated to 158 degrees Fahrenheit; after this has been done, it is rapidly cooled down to a temperature of 68 degrees Fahrenheit. The must is now ready to receive the fermenting yeast cells, and in this condition affords a most excellent medium for their growth and multiplication. The particular variety of yeast with which it is sown depends upon the special taste and bouquet which the wine is required to possess, and the yeasts derived from the surface of some kinds of Spanish grapes are very frequently selected for this purpose. Very soon after the addition of the yeast, the fermentation starts with great energy, and as soon as signs of its slackening are visible, fresh quantities of sterilised must are added, whilst the supply of sugar is maintained by the addition of small quantities of raw sugar from time to time. This process is repeated as long as the yeast cells exhibit signs of activity, and the result is this unusually large yield of alcohol from the must.

But what, it may be asked, have the lactic acid bacteria had to do in the matter; how has their presence in the must been able to stimulate the activity of the yeast cells in this remarkable manner, resulting in such a large increase in the alcohol elaborated?

It would appear that the function of these bacteria is the removal of the tartaric acid which is, of course, always present in the grape-must, the lactic acid being produced at the expense of this material, for no tartaric acid is present in the must after the lactic bacteria have finished their work.

Therefore, whereas the yeast cells will not tolerate more than about thirteen per cent. of alcohol in their surroundings when it is coupled with the presence of tartaric acid, they gladly go on working in a much more saturated alcohol-environment when this ingredient is replaced by lactic acid. It is not that the yeast cells come, as it were, personally in contact with either of these acids, for they do not touch them; but in some mysterious way, not yet fully understood, these materials exercise respectively a constraining

and expanding influence upon them, which profoundly affects their physiological functions.

Dr Sauer's experiments have been repeated and confirmed by many distinguished investigators, and it is universally acknowledged that he has made a most important discovery, which is likely to prove of immense service to wine-producers.

There cannot be a doubt that nothing but approval can be meted out to a method which enables the alcohol required to be produced *in situ*, as it were, and obviates the necessity of furnishing the deficiency from extraneous sources; whilst the replacement of the familiar tartaric acid by lactic acid has not in any way affected either the flavour or dietetic value of the wine.

LOOKING FOR A FACE.

SHE said, 'I am resign'd,' and tried to strengthen
Her trembling features with a stricken smile;
'And when these cold winds pass the days will
lengthen;

I shall be braver in a little while.'
So, soon the fallen work was reinspected,
Small children's frocks, and socks of every day;
The trifling task, the duty long neglected,
Was taken up, and done, and put away.

But when each market eve drew near its resting,
She wander'd, desolate, into the town,
Where laden fathers laugh'd, with children jesting,
The great tears rose again, and trickled down.
Sometimes a voice, with something of the sweetness
Of his dear tones, would vibrate through the heat;
Ofttimes a step, with something of the fleetness
Of his dear feet, would echo in the street!

And at the step or tone, the little city,
The flare of lamps, the light jest, and the feud
Died out for her! the stars grew dim with pity,
In silence trod the phantom multitude.
But, with her fingers clench'd and pulses burning,
She pass'd along in agonised despair,
The soul within her eyes alive with yearning,
To see again a face that was not there!

Each cottage room seem'd to be waiting daily
His sure approach; and when the sun was kind,
When in the lanes the bonnie birds sang gaily,
She watch'd to see his shadow pass the blind.
Within the garden wayside weeds assembled,
The lace-like chickweed wove its tender track;
And, looking out, the mother's white lips trembled—
'There would be much to do if he came back.'

Her children grew, in virtue and in gladness,
To be her blessings and enrich her days;
No shadows fell on them from her still sadness,
Kind words and actions glorified their ways.
But, while her soul grew greater for the giving,
Through sacrifice and gain, through flame and frost,
Through each long hour of every day of living,
Its hunger strengthen'd for the love it lost!

EDITH RUTTER.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, Limited,
47 Paternoster Row, LONDON; and EDINBURGH.